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ABSTRACT

The primary mission of Florida's community colleges is to respond to community needs for postsecondary academic and degree career education. Local community college boards of trustees are charged with setting policies to accomplish this mission. It is important that local boards of trustees, rather than outside state agencies, maintain control of colleges, as local boards are most aware of specific community needs. The success of the Florida Community College System is due to this local control that enables trustees to respond quickly and efficiently to these needs. The State Board of Community Colleges was established only to coordinate and oversee the locally controlled colleges, serving as the director of the Division of Community Colleges within the Florida Department of Education. The State Board's responsibilities include developing statewide policy, approving legislative budget requests, and reviewing and evaluating programs. The cooperation between the State Board and individual colleges is another key reason for success; the State Board receives its input from the Council of Presidents, composed of the presidents of each community college. This Council is also legally established as a task force of the Board. Because of these successes, the Florida Community College System is considered a national leader. (AJL)

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"Who's in Charge?"

The System of Governance for Florida's Twenty-Eight Community Colleges

Clark Maxwell, Jr.
John Belohlavek

Joint presentation to the Annual Trustee's Workshop of the Florida State Board of Community Colleges (Orlando, FL, September 9-10, 1996)

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"Who's In Charge?"
The System of Governance for Florida's Twenty-Eight Community Colleges

Speakers: Mr. Clark Maxwell, Jr.
Dr. John Belohlavek

CLARK MAXWELL:

The local community college boards of trustees are the governing body of the college. The boards are charged with setting policy to accomplish the mission of the college. The primary mission of Florida's community colleges, as set forth in Statute, is to respond to community needs for postsecondary academic education and degree career education. Community colleges are authorized to provide programs and services in the areas of:

- Lower-level undergraduate instruction and awarding associate degrees

- Preparation for vocations that require less than the baccalaureate degree

- Promotion of economic development of the state within the college service district

- Community services, adult pre-college education, recreational and leisure services, the general education developmental examinations (GED), and other programs and courses necessary to fulfill the mission

The programs you establish at your college enable you to meet the statutory mission for community colleges.

As Joe Lang and Syd McKenzie told you earlier today, the State of Florida follows the predominant community college governance pattern of local control. Each community college is governed by a local board of trustees that is constituted as a corporate body and is assigned, by Florida Statute, with specific duties and powers to carry out its responsibilities.

This morning Dr. Wattenbarger did an outstanding job describing the responsibilities of an autonomous community college district board of trustees. He cautioned that there is no need for outside state agencies to tell the boards what to do as long as they are meeting their colleges' needs and following statutory requirements. Dr. Wattenbarger is right to be concerned that local control be maintained. We continue to carefully review all legislation affecting the Florida Community College System and we work to defeat any legislation that could chip away at local control.

The local community college boards of trustees are the policy-makers for the colleges. You should always act as the policy board for your college - setting the direction for the college. The most important role you play is that of hiring an outstanding president who will administer the

day-to-day operation of the college and carry out your policy directives.

The key reason we have experienced so many successes in our system is because local control has enabled you to respond to the educational needs of your community - quickly and efficiently. You are in charge of setting a course for your college because you are best positioned to know the needs of your community; the educational programs that should be offered to address those needs; and the budget decisions that will enable your college to continue to meet both its short- and long-range plans.

The State Board of Community Colleges was established to oversee the system. I would like to introduce Dr. John Belohlavek, Vice Chairman of the State Board of Community Colleges. John will outline the

role of the State Board and how we work with you as you carry out your responsibility of governing your college.

DR. JOHN BELOHLAVEK:

In 1983, the Florida Legislature established the State Board of Community Colleges to provide leadership to the community college system. The role of the State Board is to **coordinate and oversee** the operation of the 28 **locally controlled** community colleges. Primary aspects of this role include:

- developing statewide policy
- approving legislative budget requests
- reviewing and evaluating programs

- information sharing
- advocating community colleges

The State Board serves as the director of the Division of Community Colleges within the Department of Education. The board appoints an executive director for the community college system who serves as the executive officer, and secretary to the Board, and is responsible for implementing the rules and policies established by the Board. The executive director is in charge of the offices of the Board and is responsible for appointing and terminating the staff of the Division of Community Colleges.

The key to the success of the Florida Community College System has always been the cooperation and interaction between the State Board and the individual colleges. The State Board receives input from the Council

of Presidents, which is composed of the presidents of each community college, and is legally established as a task force of the Board. Three other councils serve in an advisory capacity to the Council of Presidents: The Council of Business Affairs, Council on Instructional Affairs, and Council of Student Affairs.

While the State Board **oversees the system**, the governance of the system can only be successfully achieved by a local board of trustees that knows the educational and cultural needs of the local community and can respond accordingly. This structure has resulted in the system's ability to meet its goals established in Master Plans and Accountability Plans at the state and local institution levels.

Florida's social diversity and dynamic economy require innovative educational services. The state's twenty-eight comprehensive community colleges rise to

this challenge, reflecting Florida's vitality and growth and playing an integral part in community life.

You have an awesome responsibility as local trustees sitting as the local community college board of trustees. The law states that "... the board shall adopt rules, policies, and procedures which fulfill their responsibilities and contribute to the efficient operation of the college (s. 240.319, F.S.).

While I know it appears that the state Legislature often considers legislation which would take away some of that local control, I do believe that the true intent of the Legislature is for boards of trustees to operate independently at the local level.

The Florida Community College System is considered a national leader, and we acquired that recognition because of the outstanding job that you do as trustees in setting the educational opportunities available to students, and by

hiring highly qualified presidents that administer and carry out your policies.

Although we all have to live within financial constraints, statutory requirements, and legislative mandates, there still is no doubt that in Florida, the local boards of trustees are in charge of setting the policy for their colleges, and this system of governance has worked well.